

Châteaux, fortresses and Collectivité européenne d'Alsace



Using the local area's cultural heritage, châteaux and fortresses to create a 'living heritage' for residents and visitors to the Département of the Bas-Rhin

The ruins of some 80 mountain fortresses are amongst the most iconic symbols of the region of Alsace. They create a link between the past and the future that remains extremely important to our local communities. The Conseil Départemental du Bas-Rhin (the Bas-Rhin Departmental Council) has developed an innovative approach to heritage which aims to give local inhabitants the resources and tools they need in order to be able to identify with and adopt their local heritage as their own. In practical terms, this will lead to a more civic-minded approach to heritage that all sections of the local population can actively adopt. The key challenges are to raise awareness amongst our fellow citizens, encouraging the development of an active interest and involvement in local heritage. This involves organizing and training them so that they can become effective and dependable actors who have all the knowledge and skills they need for 'hands-on' work with local heritage sites that have been awarded protection because they are of particular interest or because they are vulnerable or threatened.

Over the last 10 years, the Département has been able to facilitate or fund a total of 15,000 days of work on châteaux ruins, all performed by volunteers. However, the practical involvement of local people when it comes to other types of heritage - forts, chapels, minor, unlisted built heritage - has been declining for many years.

Our built heritage is the focus of many different projects and initiatives. Training sites, training projects, projects centred on socio-economic integration, giving people a chance to find out more about their heritage - this 'living castle heritage' brings people together, helps them find fulfilment, encourages their personal development and even helps some rebuild their lives through involvement in developing projects aimed at promoting local heritage or protecting heritage sites.

- Helps project sponsors, site owners and administrators promote and preserve the built heritage sites they are responsible for,
- Offers technical guidance and advice on the best approaches and strategies in order to enable both non-professionals and experts to set up, maintain and help heritage-related projects thrive,
- Manages and organizes the network of not-for-profit bodies involved in the field of built heritage,
- Manages the activities of the 'Veilleurs de châteaux forts' network (an organization which provides volunteers who monitor the state of repair of different castles in Alsace),
- Since 2012, in partnership with 'Châteaux forts vivants' (Living castles), it organizes 'tourism for the local community' days in castle ruins (introduction to the techniques used on archaeological sites and digs, how to take measurements and make recordings etc and a chance for members of the public to put what they've seen into practice),
- Manages the Haut-Koenigsbourg Scientific Committee,
- Helps fund built heritage restoration projects.

In addition to its activities at the château du Haut-Koenigsbourg, the Département performs the following tasks:

Over the last 10 years, the Département has been able to facilitate or fund a total of 15,000 days of work on châteaux ruins, all performed by volunteers. However, the practical involvement of local people when it comes to other types of heritage - forts, chapels, minor, unlisted built heritage - has been declining for many years. Our built heritage is the focus of many different projects and initiatives. Training sites, training projects, projects centred on socio-economic integration, giving people a chance to find out more about their heritage - this 'living castle heritage' brings people together, helps them find fulfilment, encourages their personal development and even helps some rebuild their lives through involvement in developing projects aimed at promoting local heritage or protecting heritage sites.